

# **Brookline Health Department**

11 Pierce Street

Brookline, Massachusetts 02445

(617) 730-2300 fax (617) 730-2296

## **Public Health Advisory on Bats and Rabies**

Brookline Health Department officials report that numerous bats are captured in the homes of Brookline residents and tested for rabies every year. Approximately 1 in 10 bats carries the rabies virus. Therefore it is very important that bats found in peoples homes be tested to rule out rabies. If a bat is not tested rabies inoculation maybe required for all potentially exposed individuals.

Pat Maloney, Chief of Environmental Health in Brookline, said "even when people aren't sure whether they came into direct contact with a bat, it should still be tested for the rabies virus." If the bat cannot be captured, all potentially exposed persons should be vaccinated for the virus. Potentially exposed individuals include any adult or child who has been asleep while a bat has been in the room. "Waking up to find a bat in your room is considered a potential exposure according to the CDC," advises Barbara Westley, Brookline Public Health Nurse. Potentially exposed individuals also include any young child who may have been left alone with a bat and any adult or child who has come in *any* physical contact with a bat.

Persons and pets exposed to bats should be reported to the Health Department. Since there is often no visible bite mark or scratch left on the skin because of a bat's small tooth size, bat bites may go undetected. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "95% of people infected over the past 10 years were unaware they had been bitten or scratched." Rabies vaccinations consist of a series of six relatively painless shots in the arm and could mean the difference between life and death. Remember, rabies is fatal if left untreated!

The Health Department reminds Brookline residents of the following precautions to take concerning rabies:

## **CONTROL MEASURES**

- If you discover a bat in your home, determine if any humans or pets have been potentially exposed to the bat.
- If no exposure, the bat may be released outside through an open window.
- If a human or pet has been exposed to a bat, the bat should be captured and tested for rabies. You should not try to capture the bat yourself except as a last resort. If at all possible, have the bat captured by a professional pest

control expert and sent to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Rabies Lab for testing.

- Pest-proof your property. Bats and other pests may enter buildings through even very small openings in attics and basements. For a brochure on Critter-proofing your home, contact the Health Department or visit the Town's web page at [www.brooklinema.gov](http://www.brooklinema.gov).
- Be sure that your pet (cat or dog) is up-to-date with its rabies vaccinations.

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If you have any questions regarding rabies or how to respond to bats in your home, please contact the Brookline Health Department at 730-2300.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

For more Information, Contact:

Pat Maloney, Environmental Health  
(617) 730-2300  
Barbara Westley, RN, Public Health Nurse  
(617) 730-2320

## **IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

Brookline Health Department (617) 730-2300

Brookline Animal Control Unit (617) 730-2222

Town Clerk's Office (Dog Licenses) (617) 730-2010

DPW Highway Department (Removal of (617) 646-2700 Dead Animals from Public Ways)

Animal Rescue League (Responds to (617) 426-9170 Injured Animals)

Mass. Society for Prevention of Cruelty to (617) 522-6008 Animals (To Report Abuse of Animals)